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12 April 1956

Copy No. 147

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY REVIEW

DOCUMENT NO. 9
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1989
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 17 Jul 79 REVIEWER: 006514

Office of Current Intelligence

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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DATE: 26-Sep-2009

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PART III

PATTERNS AND PERSPECTIVES

BRITISH POLICY TOWARD THE USSR
ON THE EVE OF THE BULGANIN-KHRUSHCHEV VISIT

The British government, which has for some months shown increasing concern over the new tactics of Soviet foreign policy, is treating the 18-27 April visit of Bulganin and Khrushchev as primarily an opportunity to probe Russian intentions, particularly with reference to the Middle East.

The recently concluded tour of ex-premier Malenkov and the preparations for the Bulganin-Khrushchev visit have focused the British public's attention to an unusual extent on relations with the USSR. Advance arrangements have been extensively debated in the press and by the public; but except among fellow travelers and some Bevanite elements, there so far appears to be no inclination to assume that Soviet policy has undergone more than a tactical change. The arrival of security chief Serov to make advance preparations for the visit was generally considered as confirming this.

The efforts of certain Eastern European refugee groups to organize hostile demonstrations have received no important support from either Labor or Conservative Party circles, however, and the US Information Service in London believes Malenkov's performance as goodwill ambassador, which occasioned favorable press comment at a ratio of more than two to one, greatly smoothed the way for Bulganin and Khrushchev.

Re-examination of USSR Policy

This surge of public interest in relations with the USSR has been paralleled in government circles by an extensive re-examination of Soviet policy, starting with the Czech-

Egyptian arms deals last September and becoming more intensive after the 20th Party Congress in February.

The Foreign Office was particularly disturbed by the Soviet entry into areas of traditional British influence as signaled by the Middle Eastern arms deals and the Bulganin-Khrushchev visit to India and Burma. It saw these moves as meaning that Moscow, though repudiating full-scale war as an instrument of national policy, was still bent on Communist expansion through ways that might lead to war.

The Soviet policy of competitive coexistence through the use of economic enticements to underdeveloped areas is seen by London as offering a special threat to its own position in these areas because of Britain's present economic inability to compete in kind. As a result, Britain has been informally trying to interest the United States in expanding economic aid programs, particularly to the Baghdad pact countries. British officials have also been seeking ways in which London can regain the initiative on the diplomatic front.

Several aspects of the 20th Party Congress caused British officials special concern. One was the statement that there was more than one way of achieving socialism--and indeed the emphasis on "socialism" rather than "communism." This line, British officials fear, will be particularly seductive in colonial areas and in neutral or uncommitted countries.

Another aspect was the de-emphasis of Stalin in favor

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of Leninist collective leadership. One official saw this line as likely to delude segments of the British public, and stated that the Foreign Office planned a campaign to expose the dangers of Leninism.

Prime Minister Eden evidently shares the Foreign Office worries. In mid-March he reportedly gave French premier Mollet his "personal estimate" that the present Soviet diplomatic and economic tactics are even more dangerous than those in use when NATO was established.

Attitude Toward the Visit

Against this background, the British government evidently sees the Bulganin-Khrushchev visit, initiated at the summit conference last July, as both a diplomatic opportunity and a propaganda hazard.

Every effort is being made to keep the visit as much as possible in a purely diplomatic context, avoiding the "triumphal tour" aspects which characterized Bulganin's and Khrushchev's visit to India and Burma and Malenkov's trip to Britain. Of the eight full days in their scheduled stay, three provide for talks at 10 Downing Street and two others for dining with Eden--one of them including an overnight stay at the Chequers estate. A trip to only one important industrial center, Birmingham, will be made. At the same time, the Foreign Office has endeavored to dissuade the leaders of Eastern European refugee groups from causing any disturbances, and London twice sought to dissuade Moscow from sending Serov to superintend the security arrangements.

Diplomatically, on the other hand, Britain has evidently tried to capitalize to some extent on the fact that it is the first Western country to receive the top Soviet leaders.

Possibly seeing some parallel with the 1954 Geneva conference where he won great prestige as a "bridge" between East and West, Prime Minister Eden discussed the impending visit with French premier Mollet during their 10-11 March conference. Foreign Secretary Lloyd will report on it afterward to Mollet and Foreign Minister Pineau before they undertake their own trip to Moscow.

Conduct of the Talks

In the talks themselves, Eden and other top leaders seem to see mainly an opportunity to probe the intentions and mutual relationships of the top Soviet leaders. This idea was an important part of Churchill's original 1953 proposal for summit talks and has appeared again in the comments of some of the British leaders--mainly on the Labor side--who talked with Malenkov. There is also a general British hope of correcting at least some of the Soviet leaders' dangerous misconceptions about the West.

The agenda for substantive discussions is extremely loose, and the British have emphasized that they have no intention of turning the "serious talks" into negotiations on any question of multilateral interest. Topics of bilateral concern mentioned by the Foreign Office official arranging the details of the visit include such matters as radio jamming and cultural exchanges.

British officials have made clear, however, that they hope for an exchange of views on several matters of key importance. According to the American embassy, both Eden and Lloyd told Malenkov on 16 March that they were anxious to discuss the Middle East.

While Britain apparently has no proposals to offer, it would be interested in any

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Soviet overtures that would appear to lessen the prospects of war between Israel and the Arab states.

The British also anticipate a serious exchange of views on disarmament, presumably because Malenkov said that disarmament was the only subject he knew would be on his colleagues' minds. As of late February, the Foreign Office expected the Russians to offer a new friendship treaty--which Britain planned to reject on the grounds that there had been insufficient time, since their 1955 abrogation of the 1942 pact, to see how coexistence worked.

Nervousness About US Attitude

Several recent remarks by British officials about the Bulganin-Khrushchev visit have

indicated some anxiety lest Anglo-American co-operation be imperiled by too great an aura of "good will" toward the Soviet guests. The British ambassador in Moscow, for example, in telling his American colleagues of London's advice that Serov be kept at home, remarked that he hoped the Russians would send Serov anyway as a "grim reminder" of Soviet reality.

Foreign Office officials have expressed to the American embassy in London a hope for some "clumsy" Khrushchev remark that would serve to further cement Anglo-American solidarity. They have even suggested that Eden intends to receive the Russians as leaders of a hostile state--a plan scarcely compatible with the schedule prepared for them.

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